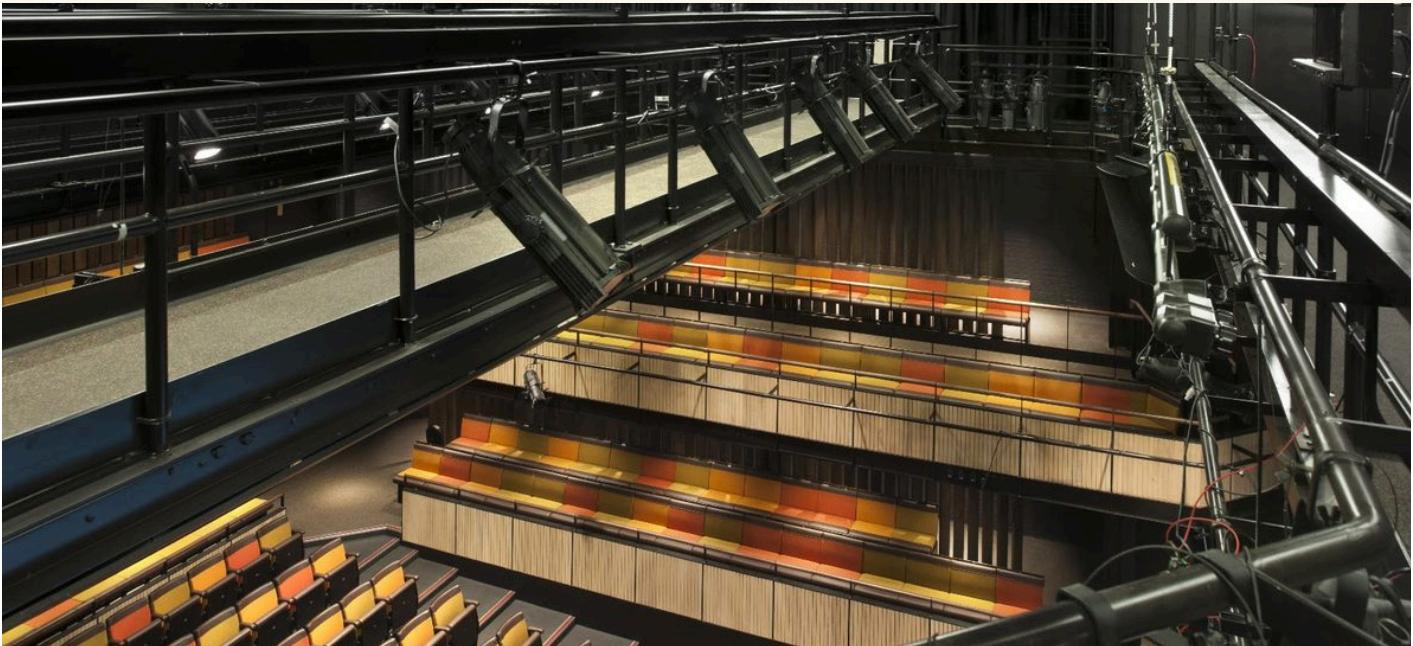


The Perse School

Cambridge, United Kingdom



Founded in 1615 as a free grammar school, Cambridge's oldest secondary keeps classics and coding on equal footing en route to Oxbridge.

RANKING DIMENSIONS

Overall	80/100
Academic outcomes	83/100
University placement	80/100
Prestige & heritage	81/100
Alumni network	79/100
Facilities	76/100
Transparency	76/100

EDITOR'S VERDICT

Cambridge has no shortage of academic schools; The Perse still stands apart because it has kept intellectual range at the centre of the proposition. Founded in 1615, it is the city’s oldest secondary school, now a co-educational day school for ages 3 to 18, and it still carries the grammar-school instinct of taking ideas seriously. The hook for parents is not heritage on its own. It is the combination of a conventional British curriculum with a culture that puts classics, mathematics, science and computing on the same table. That makes The Perse attractive to bright children who do not want their interests narrowed too early, and to families who value a school that is **fiercely academic** without turning antique.

The outcomes justify the reputation. In the Class of 2024, **88%** of **175** leavers went to top-100 universities, with **30 Oxbridge** places, 42 Russell Group destinations, and Cambridge, Oxford and Imperial College London leading the list. Those are serious numbers, and they place The Perse firmly in the top tier of selective UK day schools. It is also an HMC school, which matters less as a badge than as a marker of where it sits in the market: established, academically demanding and expensive. The average annual day fee across the full age range is **£28,446**, which is strong value by the standards of a high-performing Cambridge independent, but it remains a substantial commitment for a day school.

What is special here is the balance of old-school scholarship and modern intellectual confidence. The Perse has Anglican roots, but religion is not the main story; academic seriousness is. The school will suit children who enjoy being stretched, who read beyond the syllabus, who like the company of other able pupils, and who can cope with a culture where university ambitions are plain and high. It will also suit families who want a day-school education with genuine sixth-form firepower rather than a softer pastoral sell. This is not a school for parents seeking *constant hand-holding* or for students who need a low-pressure environment to find momentum. It is for the *self-propelled*, the intellectually hungry and the *quietly competitive* — the sort of pupil who wants a school where Oxbridge is a real route, not a brochure line.

STRENGTHS

- Founded in 1615, giving it a long-established identity focused on curiosity, independence of mind and creativity.
- Strong university destinations: in 2024, 88% of leavers progressed to top-100 universities, with 30 Oxbridge places.
- Bursary awards range from 5-100% of annual fees, and the school provides more than 1 million pounds of bursary support to pupils.
- It operates as a co-educational 3-18 institution with three constituent schools each on its own site, covering Pelican (3-7), Prep (7-11) and Upper/Sixth Form (11-18).
- Well-invested facilities including the Peter Hall Performing Arts Centre and the Perse Sports Centre with swimming pool, sports hall and climbing wall.
- Pupils balance academic work with a wide programme of clubs and societies alongside opportunities for university-level research.

TRADE-OFFS

- As a premium Cambridge day school, fees are high, with the day fee at £30,000 a year.
- Entry is academically selective and the catchment is effectively concentrated within a roughly thirty-mile radius of Cambridge, so relocating families further afield are not realistic candidates.
- No academic scholarships are offered at Year 7 entry; the only scholarship route is a modest, one-off music award of 450 pounds for candidates already playing an instrument to at least Grade 6.
- The school's three-site structure - separate Pelican, Prep and Upper campuses - means families with children spanning different age phases must navigate more than one site rather than a single unified campus.

ADMISSIONS

Main entry points are Year 7, Year 9 and the sixth form, alongside earlier entry to the Pelican and Prep schools; families register online, pay a non-refundable registration fee, and sit entrance assessments in English, maths and reasoning, followed by interviews and school references. Registration typically closes in December before the entry year, with assessments held in January and offers in early February. The process is selective and draws applicants from within roughly a 30-mile radius of Cambridge; sixth-form places are conditional on achieving specified GCSE grades in chosen A-level subjects.

NOTABLE ALUMNI (46)

SPORT: Keith Ahlers, Mark Saggars, Robert M. Kark

MUSIC: Ronnie Ross

DRAMA: Colin McFarlane, Jeremy Silberston, Simon Wells

VISUAL_ARTS: Eileen Frances Balfour-Browne, Margaret Tomlinson, Q136505601

LETTERS: James Alexander Green, Rajani Palme Dutt, F. R. Leavis, Rodney Dale, Mark Saggars, Tony Cornell

POLITICS: Rajani Palme Dutt, John Powley, Quentin Thomas, Roger Pepys

SCIENCE: John Polkinghorne, Harold James, James Alexander Green, G. L. S. Shackle, F. R. Leavis, William Ernest Johnson, Aidan Southall, Christine Hamill

BUSINESS: David Tang

WTS RATING 

This profile summarises editorial research by World's Top Schools. Verify all admissions dates directly with the school before submitting. Sources are cited in the full online profile at WorldsTopSchools.com/schools/sch_e619a449d3.